

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-01 SIL-01 NIC-01 /071 W

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R 201954Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4450

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 27779

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH LABOR SCENE

1. SUMMARY. 19 NOVEMBER STRIKE FELL SHORT OF UNIONS' EXPECTATIONS BUT MARCH FROM BASTILLE TO GARE DE L'EST WAS MASSIVE AND SUCCESSFUL. WISELY GOF IS MAKING LOW KEY COMMENTS ON MODEST STRIKE RESULTS AND OFFICIALLY CONFIRMED DECISION TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS FOR 1975 CONTRACTS IN DECEMBER. CONTINUATION OF PTT STRIKE COMPLICATES GOF TASK TO
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RESUME DIALOGUE WITH UNIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. PREDICTABLY THE DAY AFTER PARIS IS CAUGHT IN A NUMBERS GAME AS AUTHORITIES AND OBSERVERS TRY TO ASSESS THE RESULTS OF THE 19 NOVEMBER NATIONAL STRIKES ORGANIZED BY CGT-CFDT AND FEN. ESTIMATES OF PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AND NATIONALIZED SECTORS VARY FROM 20 TO 50 PERCENT AND IN PRIVATE SECTOR FROM 10 TO 20 PERCENT. WE BELIEVE THAT A MORE ACCURATE FIGURE LIES SOMEWHERE IN LOWER RANGE. HOWEVER, EVEN IF HIGH ESTIMATE WERE TRUE THE INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION IS THAT THE STRIKE FELL CONSIDERABLY SHORT OF TRADE UNION EXPECTATIONS. ONCE AGAIN THE EXPLANATION LIES IN THE FACT THAT THE RANK AND FILE IS NOT IN A MILITANT MOOD AND IS STUBBORNLY RESISTING LABOR LEADERS' EXHORTATIONS.

3. IN CONTRAST TO THE STRIKE ITSELF, THE MARCH FROM BASTILLE TO THE GARE DE L'EST WAS MASSIVE AND UN-QUESTIONABLY SUCCESSFUL. BETWEEN 65'000 FIGURE GIVEN BY POLICE AND 400,000 CLAIMED BY CGT, OUR ESTIMATE IS 200,000. AS IN OTHER RECENT MARCHES THE PTT STRIKERS CONSTITUTED A SIZABLE GROUP OF PEACEFUL AND DISCIPLINED MARCHERS WHO STROLLED AND CHANTED TRADE UNION SLOGANS UNDER EXCEPTIONALLY BLUE SKIES.

4. IN LIGHT OF THIS MIXED PICTURE, PRESS AND RADIO-TV COMMENTATORS TEND TO DESCRIBE THE 19 NOVEMBER EXERCISE AS A STAND-OFF BETWEEN GOF AND UNIONS AND TO WELCOME THE FACT THAT THERE WAS NO CLEAR VICTORY BY EITHER SIDE. THEY ARGUE THAT THIS CREATES THE RIGHT CONDITIONS FOR "DEPOLITICIZING" THE LABOR AGITATION AND RESUMING GOF-UNION DIALOGUE.

5. WISELY GOF REACTED IN A LOW KEY TO MODEST STRIKE RESULT. CHIRAC SAID IN A SPEECH THAT THE FRENCH WORKERS SHOWED THAT THEY ARE AWARE OF WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION. GOF SPOKESMAN

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REPORTED AT THE END OF WEDNESDAY'S COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS MEETING THAT "PRESIDENT GISCARD MADE THE
POINT THAT THE WORKERS ARE AWARE OF THE CURRENT
DIFFICULTIES OF THE FRENCH ECONOMY AND DO NOT WISH
TO AGGRAVATE THEM THROUGH ACTIONS WHICH ARE NOT
DIRECTLY RELATED TO THEIR JOBS."

6. GISCARD ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE ITS
FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION AND TO KEEP IN MIND THAT
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THE SACRIFICES TO BE ASKED OF ALL MUST BE
"EQUITABLE." HE FURTHER CONFIRMED THAT NEGOTIATIONS

FOR 1975 CONTRACTS IN PUBLIC SECTORS WILL BEGIN
BEFORE END OF THE YEAR.

7. COMMENT: WE TEND TO AGREE THAT THE STAND-OFF
RESULT OF THE 19 NOVEMBER EXERCISE IS ABOUT THE BEST
ONE COULD HOPE AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME. A CLEAR
VICTORY BY EITHER SIDE COULD HAVE CAUSED THE RANK
AND FILE TO CHANGE ATTITUDES. WHILE WE AGREE ALSO
THAT THE STRIKE RESULTS MAY "DEPOLITICIZE" CURRENT
LABOR AGITATION, WE BELIEVE THAT RESUMPTION OF
GOF-UNION DIALOGUE WILL NOT BE EASY. ANTI-INFLATION
DRIVE IS DEPRIVING GOF OF ROOM FOR MANEUVER AND
CONTINUATION OF PTT STRIKE BY 76 PERCENT OF MAIL
SORTING EMPLOYEES (32 PERCENT OF TOTAL PTT EMPLOYEES)
IS A MAJOR COMPLICATING FACTOR.

8. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, STRIKING PTT EMPLOYEES
INCLUDE YOUNG STUDENTS, WORKERS WITH SECOND JOBS,
AND GENERALLY HIGHLY POLITICIZED LEFTIST AND
TROTSKYITE ELEMENTS WHICH DO NOT RESPOND TO UNION
DISCIPLINE. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT CGT AND CFDT,
WHICH CLAIM TO LEAD STRIKE, ARE HAVING AS MUCH
TROUBLE WITH STRIKERS AS FORCE OUVRIERE, WHICH WITH
TONGUE IN CHEEK CALLED FOR END OF STRIKE.
RUSH

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